(b) According to the letter received from the Hotel and Restaurant Association of India, the Star hotels and Food Joints have to sell packaged items of cold drinks and drinking water at a premium to make up for the added services they render like air conditioning, a proper ambience, comfortable sitting, uniformed waiters, tables with linen, chairs, glasses, cutlery etc.

(c) According to information available, action has been initiated against 1461 hotels/ food joints by the State enforcement authorities of Legal Metrology since January, 2002 for selling packaged commodities at price higher than MRP.

(d) The Standards of Weights and Measures (Packaged Commodities) Rules, 1977 provide that no retail dealer or other person including manufacturer/packer/wholesale dealer shall sell a packaged commodity at a price exceeding the retail sale price declared on the package.

(e) According to the information available, cases were registered against 7 five star hotels for selling the packaged commodities at price exceeding MRP declared on their packages. The cases have been compounded with fines ranging from Rs. 3000 to Rs. 19000/-

Recommendations made by "High level Committee on long-term grain policy"

2605. SHRI NANDI YELLAIAH :Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state :

(a) the status report of implementation by Government as on date, with regard to various recommendations and proposals as made through a report by the "High level Committee on long-term grain policy", July 2002; and

(b) what remedial measures are being taken by Government towards greater production and proper security of Food Distribution in view of the report having shown at all India level, much decrease in food production, area of cultivation and yield per hectare from 1999 which is a warning signal for a rapid negative growth of production?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SUBHASH MAHARIA : (a) Government has examined the major recommendations

made by the High Level Committee on Long Term Grain Policy (HLC) constituted under the Chairmanship of Prof. Abhijit Sen.

The action taken with regard to the main recommendations of the HLC are as under :—

(i) The HLC has made several recommendations with regard to the Fixing of the Minimum Support Prices of foodgrains. The Government has, however, decided that the present Minimum Support Price Regime should continue.

(ii) With regard to the recommendation of the HLC for introduction of a 'universal Public-Distribution System (PDS) with uniform Central Issue Prices (CIPs). It is felt by the Government that the targeted PDS was introduced in June, 1997 with a view to target the unprivileged sections of society, as the earlier universal PDS did not adequately focus on the poor and hungry and had an urban bias. Under the TPDS, the families Below the Poverty Line (BFL) have been identified and foodgrains are supplied to the BPL families at highly subsidized rates at less than 50% of the economic cost at the scale of 35 Kg. per family per month. The introduction of a universal PDS will result in the PDS losing its focus on meeting the needs of the poor.

(iii) The HLC has recommended that for an effective foodgrains management system, it is necessary to liquidate the excess accumulation of stocks. To achieve this, several measures have been taken as a result of which stocks have reduced from 630 lakh tonnes as on 1st July, 2002 to 352 lakh tonnes as on 1st July, 2003.

(iv) The HLC also recommended disposal of old stocks and stock procured under relaxed quality stocks. As a result of measures taken for disposal of such stocks, over 80% of current stocks are less than 2 years old.

(v) As recommended by the HLC, the coverage of households has been increased by an additional 50 lakh persons with focus on the destitute population under Antyodaya Anna Yojana.

(vi) The allocation under the Sampoorna Gramin Rojgar Yojana (SGRY) and Special Component of the SGRY scheme has been considerably enhanced as recommended by the HLC.

(vii) To improve functioning of the PDS instructions have already been issued for strict implementation of PDS Control Order to ensure greater transparency in the working of the PDS and reduction in the diversion of foodgrains under the PDS. Guidelines have been issued for the involvement of the Panchayati Raj Institutions in the implementation of the TPDS.

(b) The agricultural production in the country shows a long term upward trend, albeit with fluctuations due to weather aberrations. A major factor for sustaining this growth, especially in foodgrains production, has been the procurement policy under Minimum Support Price operations. Government is also implementing the following schemes to further improve the production of cereals :—

(i) Integrated Cereals Development Programme in Rice Based Cropping Systems Areas (ICDP-Rice)

(ii) Integrated Cereals Development Programme in Wheat Based Cropping System Areas (ICDP-Wheat)

(iii) Integrated Cereals Development Programme in Coarse Cereals Based Cropping System Areas (ICDP-Coarse Cereals)

From October, 2002 these schemes have heen subsumed under the Macro Management Programme with a view to provide flexibility to the States according to regionally differentiated needs of the States. As a new initiative, a Centrally Sponsored Scheme on "On Farm Water Management for Increasing Crop Production in Eastern India" has been launched on 19th March, 2002 for the year 2001-02 and for the Tenth Five Year Plan. the objective of the scheme is to exploit the ground/surface water, efficient water utilization and management for increasing crop production in Eastern India.

The schemes undertaken to increase production of cereals, as detailed, the decision to continue with the present procurement regime and the actions taken to expand the scope and allocation of foodgrains under various welfare schemes of the Government will ensure food security in the country.